

Period Farm Apple Cider (French)

Adaptation of the Process Described by Charles Estienne

January 15, 2020

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Overview

Charles Estienne's (1504 - 1564) book *The Covntrey Farm*¹ is a treatise that describes, in part, how cider was made on his French orchard, and that is the drink presented here today. Below will be the recipe, a summary of Estienne's cider process, the process I followed, and then a comparison between the two.

The text of the book indicates a date of 1572, and another source (both found simply by Googling the name of the book and author) indicates that the book was published in 1583. Those dates aren't too drastically dissimilar that some variation isn't a major issue.

Essentially the cider was fermented using modern methods and a pure yeast strain, but was executed similarly to the process described in Estienne's 1564 treatise. Overall, the cider ended dry and retained much of the apple qualities one would expect. The cider is still because it fermented to completion in the carboy, and no priming sugar was added during bottling. This was done to more accurately reflect a period brewing process and taste.

Estienne's Procedure

The full text of Estienne's cider making process will be attached in an appendix. What follows is a summary of his description.

- Cider must be made from apples that are grown (not wild!) for flavor, juiciness, aroma, and firm flesh. He puts some effort into describing methods by which one should manage an orchard.
- Apples gathered on a sunny September day.
- Pile the apples (preferably in a roofed protected area) and leave for a month to fully ripen. If freezing occurs, cover apples with cloths or straw.
- Break the apples up by grinding into small pieces using a mill with one or two millstones of heavy wood or stone, with an ox or horse for power.
- Apple pulp is then transferred to clean vats and allowed to "work for a time as wine does."
- The best juice is drawn into casks (white wine casks preferred) without pressing. Juice that comes voluntarily without pressing is the best, strongest, and sweetest cider.
- In dry years, small amounts of water added to the pulp improves the product.
- The pulp is pressed to extract the juice. Estienne comments that the pressed and unpressed juices should not be mixed. Instead, ferment separately so one can obtain a premium cider and a good quality cider.
- The remaining pulp can be mixed with water, allowed to steep for another day, and then re-pressed to make a small drink for the household.
- The partly fermented juices are transferred into casks and allowed to ferment with the bung left open for several days to purge froth, scum, and other impurities from the cask.
- When foaming stops, bung should be tightly bunged.

Cider taste considerations:

¹Charles Estienne, *L'Agriculture et Maison Rustique* (Unknown, 1572).



- Young Cider is sweet; old cider is sharper and, similar to wine, the oldest is the least sweet, but can be stored for two to three years.
- Casks must be cleaned as soon as possible to prevent rotting.
- Sour apples yield more juice than sweet ones and cider made with a mixture of the two is sourer, but may be preferred to drink in hot weather.
- Cider that is made without water clears more slowly than that made with water.

My Procedure

Ingredients

- Apples
 - The cider is made from the juice of mixed cultivated apples from the Beardsley Orchards Cider Mill in Shelton, CT. The exact mix is unknown, but Beardsley grows Honeycrisp, Macoun, Cortland, Mutsu, Jonagold, Empire, Red Delicious, McIntosh, Winesap, Braeburn, and Fuji apples. These apples are grown for flavor, aroma, pleasant taste.
- Yeast
 - Wyeast 4766 Cider.
 - Note: This is a pure yeast culture of unspecified country of origin and strain. Wine and champagne yeasts can also be used for cider, but have a tendency to produce drier and more alcoholic beverages.

Process

January 6, 2018:

- Six gallons of the pressed apples were allowed to warm to room temperature (approx 70 F).
- Cider was transferred to a clean and sanitized six-gallon glass carboy.
- Yeast pitched.
- Airlock added and let sit to ferment in a 70 F room.

March 22, 2018

- Cleaned and sanitized approx. 30 wine and swing-top bottles
- Cleaned and sanitized bottling equipment.
 - Siphon, hoses, bottle wand
- Transferred cider to wine bottles and corked.



Comparison of Estienne's and Edgar's Processes

Similarities

- Both processes use cultivated apples known for sweetness, aroma, and pleasant quality.
- Apples for both were processed by milling and pressing to separate juice from the pulp.
- Estienne's and my processors allowed juices to ferment at atmospheric pressure
- Both ciders were transferred to sealed vessels for aging and storage.

Differences

- The juice I used was made from freshly picked apples that were not fully ripened for a month.
- The apples I used were milled and pressed in a single operation, rather than two occasions as specified by Estienne.
- The juice was kept in a glass carboy under an airlock for the duration of fermentation up until bottling. Period fermentation was usually done in an open vat prior to pressing, and partially in an unsealed cask (with bung removed or covered with cheesecloth). The cask limits contact with air, and the open bung vents CO₂, which fulfills a similar purpose to modern airlocks.
- Estienne's process uses the natural yeast found on apple skins. I used the pure culture due to uncertainty in whether the UV treatment killed off the present yeast.

Table Comparison

Table 1: Comparison table of Edgar and Estienne.

	Estienne's Process	Edgar's Process
Apples	Cultivated	Cultivated
Picked	September	November
Stored	One Month	Fresh
Milled	Stone Press	Steel Pulper
Pressed	Few days after milling	Same day as milling
Yeast	Natural Fermentation (wild yeast)	Wyeast 4766
Fermentation	Wood cask, no bung	Glass Carboy
Airlock	N/A	Yes, until bottled
Fermentation Duration	Until foaming stops, then seal	Until fully fermented (11wks)
Racked of Lees	No	No
Primed	No	No
Sealed	When foaming stops.	When fully fermented
Aged	Unheated but protected. No freezing.	70 F, young cider



Appendix

Due to printing limitations, full text of the procedure can not be added. However, a few links are provided to get the reader started in their perusal of the cider. I apologize in advance trying to type these links in. I have put my email below if one desires an electronic copy of any of this.

- The following link is a direct link to the chapter in the book that describes the cider making process:
 - <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A00419.0001.001/1:7.1.49.1?rgn=div4;view=fulltext>
- For a general purpose and mostly period (the book itself isn't strictly period, but the processes therein are period) book on brewing resources, see Digby (also in References page):
 - <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/16441/16441-h/16441-h.htm>
- Picture of medieval cider mill:
 - https://www.engr.psu.edu/mtah/photos/millstones/avoncroft__4.jpg

Email

Feel free to email me with any questions or comments at: cja66@drexel.edu



References

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